

**Readings:** *Exodus 3:1 – 8,13 – 15; Ps. 102 (103): 1 - 11; 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 6,10 – 12;*  
*Luke 13:1 – 9.*

On the first two Sundays of Lent we have heard readings which are linked by the themes of faith in God and of God's revelation of his unbreakable covenant with us, his people.

Today's readings are linked by the theme of God's call to repentance.

In the Old Testament Reading Moses, who it seems has no knowledge of God, is called to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. God reveals himself from the burning bush as *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*, and says that he intends to deliver the people from Egypt and bring them to their homeland. Moses is commanded (in verse 10 which is omitted from our reading) to carry out God's purpose and to *bring the children of Israel out of Egypt*.

Exodus and the other books of the Old Testament tell us of his difficulties in carrying out this task.

In the reading from 1 Corinthians Paul recalls the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land and the repeated refusal of the Israelites to be obedient to God's plan for them – *most of them failed to please God*. He then makes a claim which is of great importance for our use and understanding of scripture: *this happened to them as a warning, and it was written down to be a lesson **for us***.

We read and study the Old Testament not because it's a lesson in Israelite history but because we need its lessons for our own Christian discipleship. We have been called to leave our slavery – a slavery not to Egypt and Pharaoh its king, but to sin and the devil, who seeks to maintain a kingdom of evil, opposed to the kingdom of God.

In the Gospel Reading Jesus deals with a problem which faces everyone who considers the suffering of the world: Are those who suffer most to be regarded as the most wicked in the world? Have they brought their sufferings on themselves? The answer Jesus gives is clear. No: neither those caught up in political strife nor those who suffer from natural disasters can be regarded as *greater sinners or more guilty than all the other people*. But he goes on to draw a lesson for his hearers from these sufferings: *Unless you repent you will all perish*.

He adds a parable – the message of which is that – like a gardener giving a tree a second chance to produce fruit – God is giving us a chance to repent of our sins and be changed.